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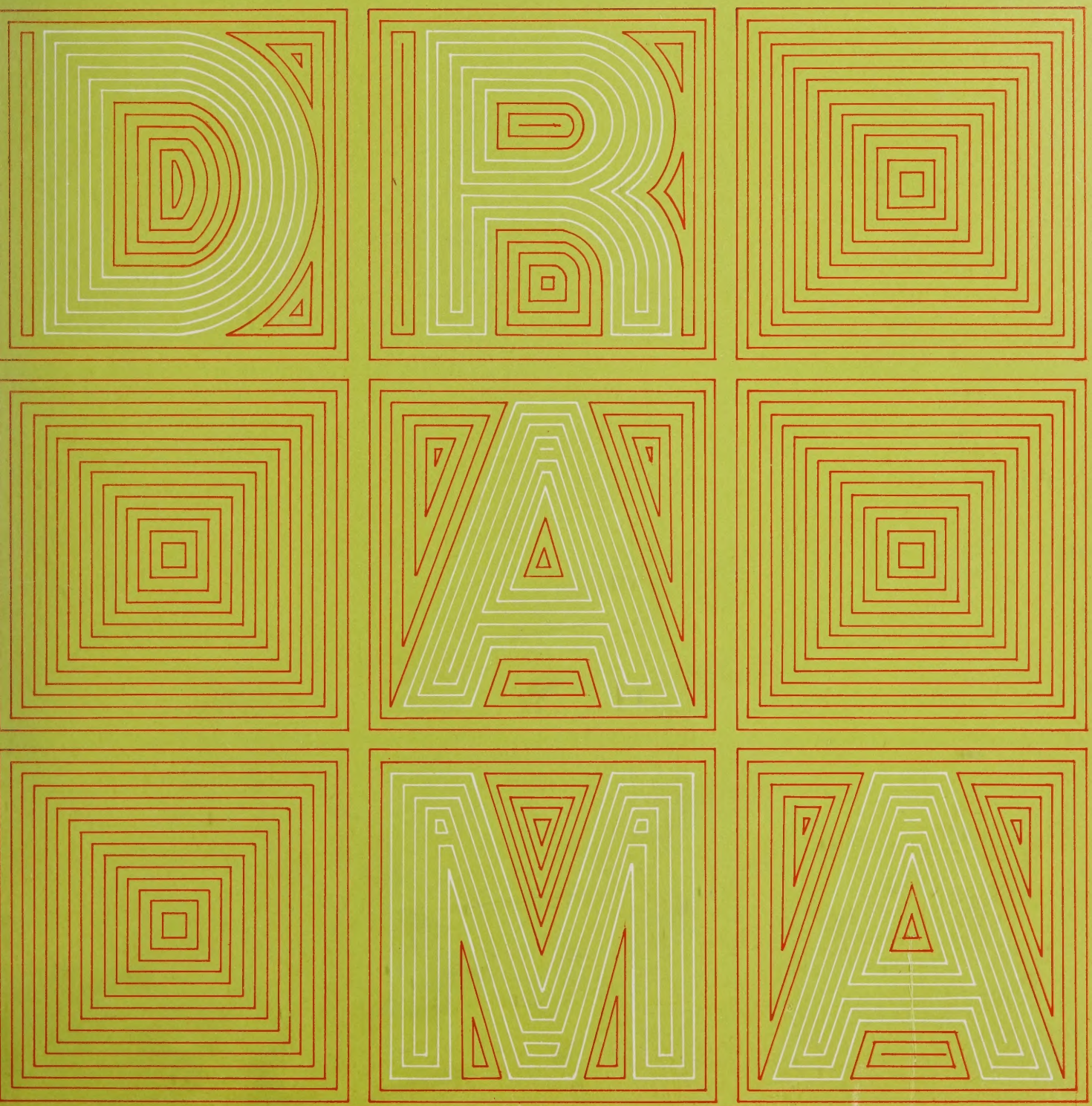
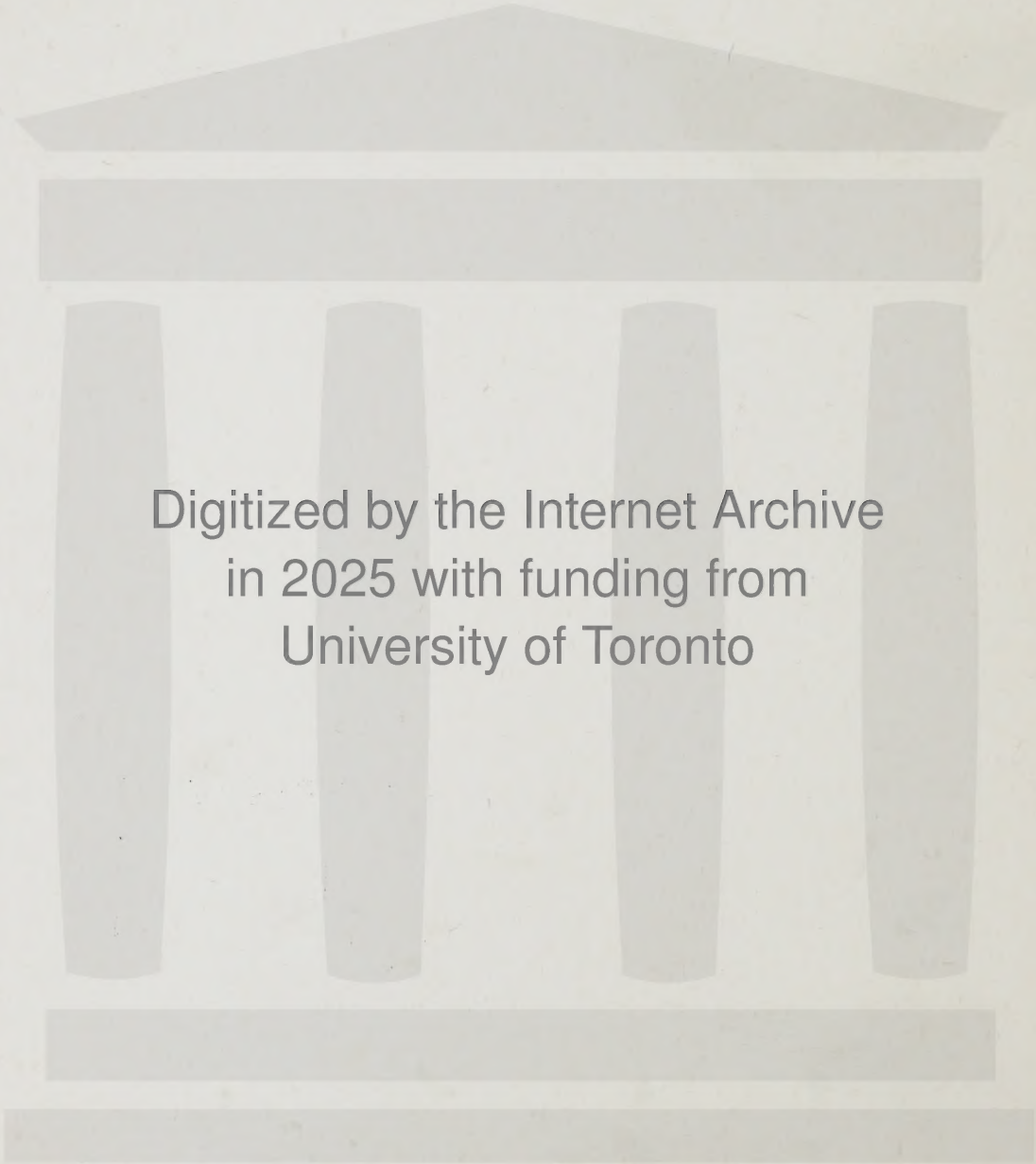
Ontario Department
of Education

Dramatic Arts Facilities

1971





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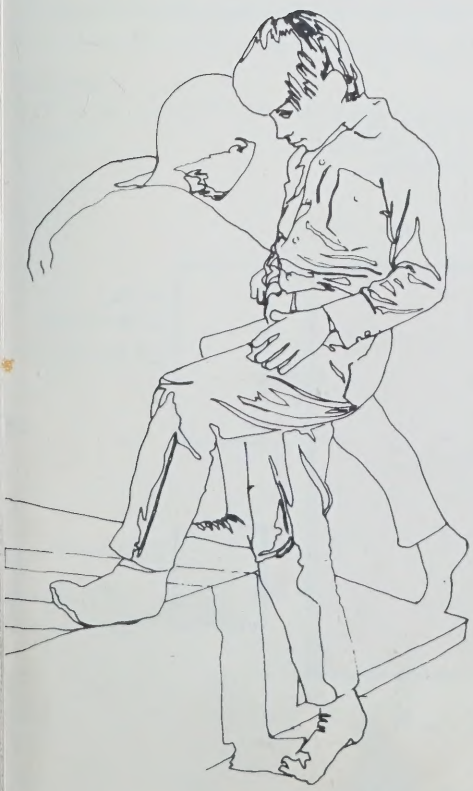
Prepared by
School Planning and Building Research
in conjunction with
the Curriculum Committee on Dramatic Arts
May, 1971

Dramatic Arts (Creative Drama and Theatre Arts) Facilities

Statement of Function

Drama means doing. It is one of the means by which young people discover more about themselves and the world around them. Because it involves the whole person through his mind, emotions, body, voice and imagination, it encourages a balanced and harmonious development as part of the learning process.

It should also be recognized that there is a distinction between drama and theatre. Drama is for everyone; it is largely spontaneous; it requires no 'natural talent'; it is intended to assist the personal development of the individual. Theatre is more specialized; it is specifically organized and rehearsed; it is intended to be shared with an audience. Although drama may lead to theatre, it may lead in other directions as well and can, in fact, be a vital and important end in itself. Theatre, while not the necessary result of drama, depends to some extent on the preparation provided by a drama program.



In a kindergarten to grade 13 program, the students will probably move from Creative Drama into Theatre Arts, although if they do so, the elements of the former will strongly influence the approach to the latter. Thus, any Dramatic Arts program will be developmental rather than strictly sequential, and it would be a mistake to assume that any particular activity, such as puppetry, rehearsed scenes from scripted plays, or multi-media experimental presentations are suitable only at one stage of the program. For this reason, it is essential that space for Dramatic Arts be as flexible as possible, so that if students are ready and able to explore a more challenging and sophisticated activity, their creative planning will not be crippled by the inadequacy of poorly planned facilities.

A distinctive feature of Dramatic Arts is that much of the work, at all levels of difficulty, is done by students working together in small groups. This creates the desirability for small project-group areas in addition to the regular space allotted to the subject.

The learning experience cannot be truly effective or profitable in a regular, unconverted classroom, where teacher and students are working in inadequate facilities, which militate against the success of the program.

Common Planning Errors

- Designing a Dramatic Arts area without seeking the advice of teachers who will be using it. Such consultants will be aware of specific needs and will be of help in avoiding duplication and waste.
- Installing unnecessarily elaborate and expensive technical equipment, which will seldom be used and for which maintenance money may not be available.
- Providing inadequate storage space for permanent technical equipment and for temporary student project materials.
- Building permanent platforms or stage areas, thereby making the room less flexible.
- Planning facilities without giving consideration to the future expansion of a Dramatic Arts program that may require considerably more space and equipment.

Spaces for Dramatic Arts

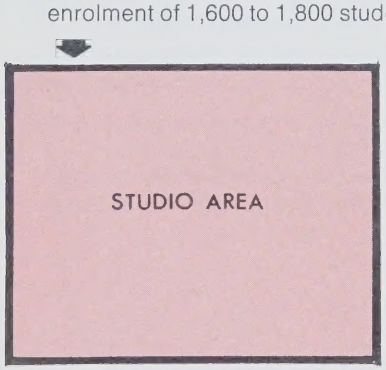
Dramatic Arts may be taught in any of the following spaces:

(a) a single classroom;

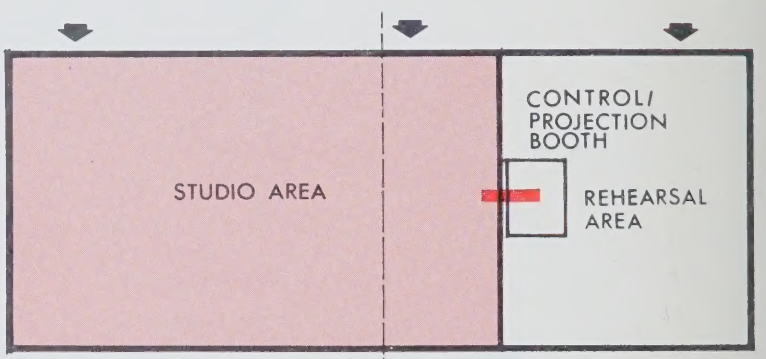
(b) a double classroom (suitable for 30 students);

(c) a specifically designed studio (suitable for 30 students);

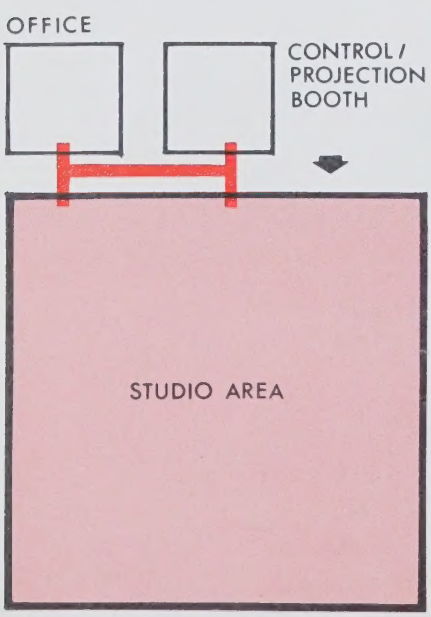
(d) a specifically designed studio complex (suitable for 60 students — applicable only to secondary schools with an enrolment of 1,600 to 1,800 students).



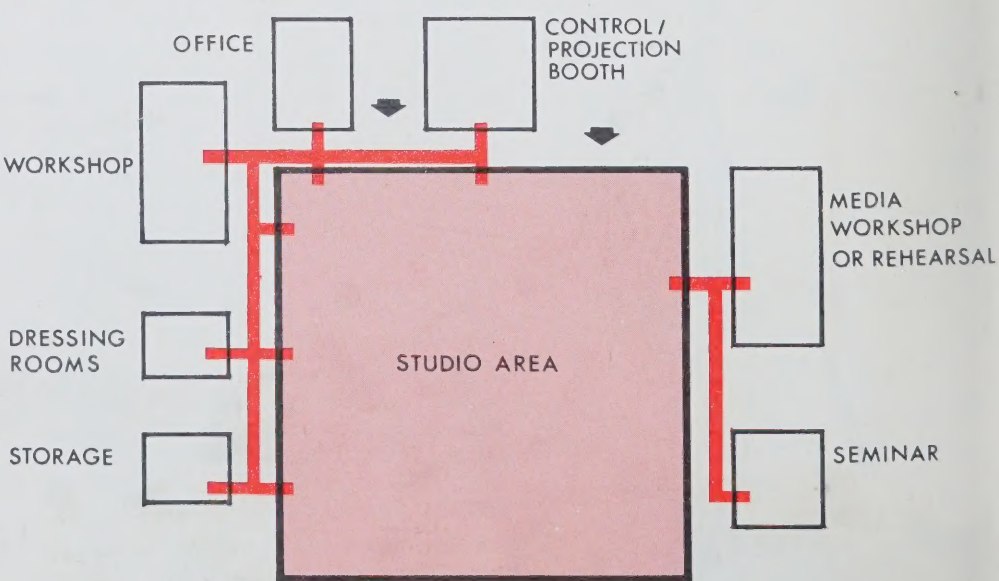
(a)



(b) - SUITABLE FOR 30 PUPILS



(c) - SUITABLE FOR 30 PUPILS



(d) - SUITABLE FOR 60 PUPILS
SECONDARY SCHOOL
ENROLMENT - 1600 - 1800 PUPILS

General Requirements

Space
The most important requirement of any Dramatic Arts area is free space; for movement, for a variety of small group and large group activities, for storage, and for the installation of basic technical equipment.

A Projection Wall
One wall of the Dramatic Arts area should be free of electrical outlets, ventilators, blackboards, etc., so that it can be used as a white cyclorama-type background or as a projection area for film and slides.

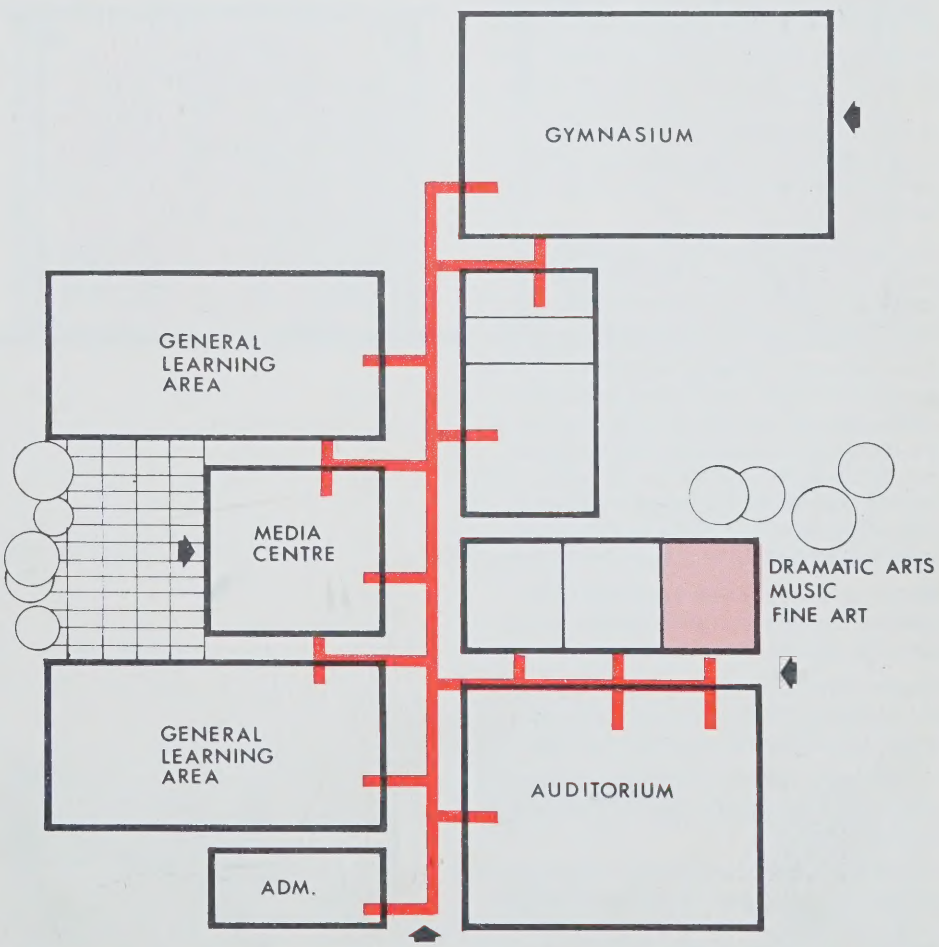
Flooring
To permit the greatest flexibility of activity, the studio area should be carpeted with good quality, static-free carpeting. A dark-coloured carpet will do much to create a distinctive atmosphere for the room, as well as being practical from a maintenance point of view. Carpeting also does much to reduce the noise in a Dramatic Arts room.

Lighting
Auxiliary stage-type lighting of some sort should supplement the normal room lighting. A single wall rheostat or a dimmer panel should be installed to control these lights.

Windows
All windows should be fitted with black-out curtains.

Location

- Dramatic Arts, like Music, is a group activity which results in varying degrees of noise and movement. It is, therefore, necessary that any space allotted to this subject be located in an area sufficiently separated from learning areas requiring quiet surroundings.
- It should also, ideally, be located close to the auditorium, since there will be many occasions when a teacher may wish to transfer an activity or presentation to the auditorium stage.
- The space should not be adjacent to a heavily travelled corridor with lockers, or a busy public area. Just as Dramatic Arts should not disturb other school activities, so the concentration demanded from the students in this subject requires the same respect and consideration.



A Single Classroom

The conversion of a single classroom into a Dramatic Arts studio requires that folding or stacking chairs be substituted for desk units and chairs to provide the necessary free space for activities.

Floor-to-ceiling draw curtains, of black-out quality, should be installed along three of the four walls, leaving the wall containing the door and blackboards uncovered. These curtains should be a dark neutral shade, ideally similar to the colour of the floor carpeting. Such curtains are relatively inexpensive and achieve three purposes. They immediately transform the traditional classroom into a studio, with its own distinctive atmosphere; they provide a neutral backdrop for improvisations and theatrical presentations; and they help absorb the excessive brightness from the stage-type lighting.

Built-in shelving for books, recordings, tapes, etc., and pigeon-hole cubicles for storing student project materials are both essential features of such a room.

Some modest additional stage-type lighting is required. Pipes can be attached to the walls, close to the ceiling, in each corner of the room, and to each pipe two spotlights can be clamped. Two hundred and fifty watt fresnel-type lamps are recommended. A wall rheostat or dimmer panel should be installed by the door to control this lighting.

As part of its permanent equipment, the studio should have a record player, a tape recorder, and a slide projector.

Duplex electrical outlets should be placed, at baseboard level, on three of the four walls, the projection wall being left free.

The acoustic tile ceiling should be painted a dark neutral colour, to solve the problem of light reflection.

Movable carpeted platforms of varying shapes and sizes can be placed anywhere in the room to provide different levels and flexible staging arrangements. The following basic units are recommended:

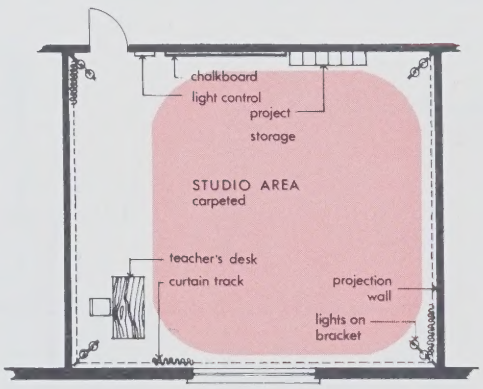
two platforms: 8′ x 4′ x 1′

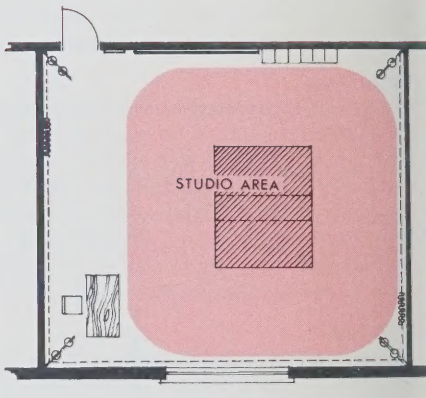
one platform: 8′ x 2′ x 1′

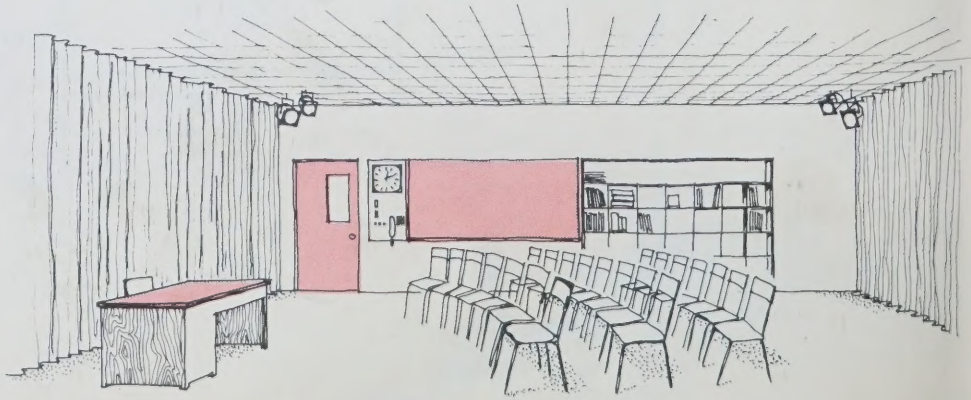
one platform: 4′ x 2′ x 1′

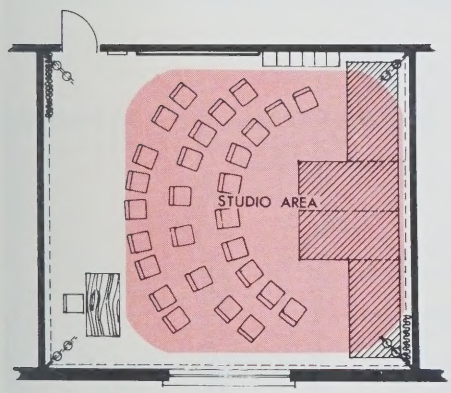
one platform: 2′ x 2′ x 1′

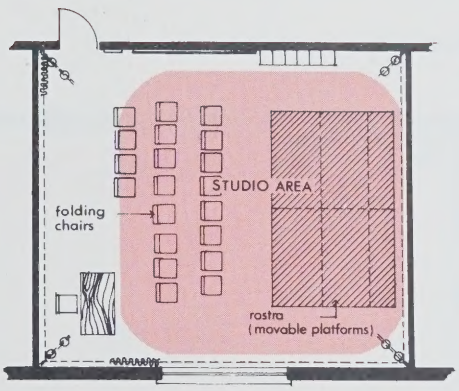
Single Classroom
Variety of Arrangements

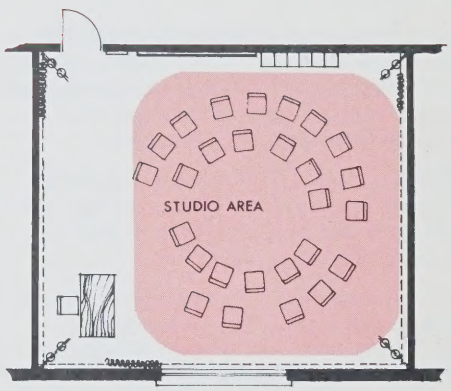


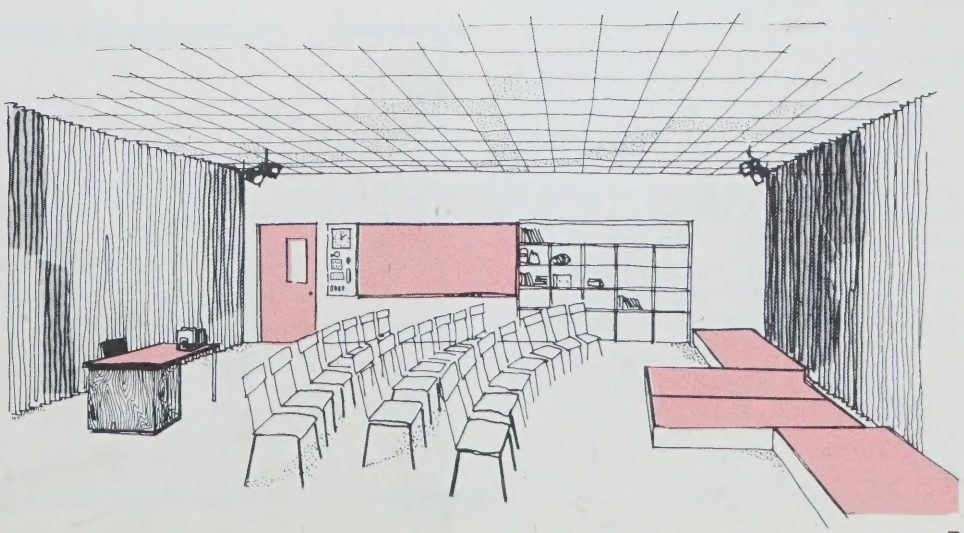





STUDIO AREA


STUDIO AREA
folding chairs
rostra (movable platforms)


STUDIO AREA



A Double Classroom

The double classroom naturally offers more scope and adaptability than a single classroom as a Dramatic Arts area. It can accommodate more individual and group activities, provide a studio of more suitable size for dramatic presentations, and allow for an additional workshop area. This workshop can serve many varied purposes. It can be used for rehearsals, media work, make-up instruction, seminars, prop construction, and so forth.

The conversion of a double classroom into a Dramatic Arts studio and workshop requires that folding or stacking chairs be substituted for desk units and chairs to provide the necessary free space for activities.

A floor-to-ceiling partition can effectively separate the studio from the workshop, with a raised projection/control booth included as part of the construction.

In the studio, floor-to-ceiling draw curtains, of black-out quality, should be installed along three walls, the exception being the newly constructed partition. These curtains should be a dark neutral shade, ideally similar to the colour of the floor carpeting. Such curtains are relatively inexpensive and achieve three purposes. They transform the traditional classroom into a studio with its own distinctive atmosphere; they provide a neutral backdrop for improvisations and theatrical presentations; and they help absorb the excessive brightness from the stage-type lighting.

Some modest additional stage-type lighting is required. If the ceiling of the studio is at least twelve feet high, a ceiling grid should be installed to hold the stage lights. The proposed grid is simple in design — basically, pipes hung approximately two feet away from and parallel to the walls. If the ceiling is less than twelve feet high, pipes can be attached to the walls, close to the ceiling, in each corner of the room to hold the necessary lights. With a ceiling grid, twelve 500-watt fresnel-type spotlights are recommended; with corner pipes eight similar lamps are sufficient.

This lighting system should be controlled by a portable dimmer panel.

The acoustic tile ceiling should be painted a dark neutral colour to solve the problem of light reflection.

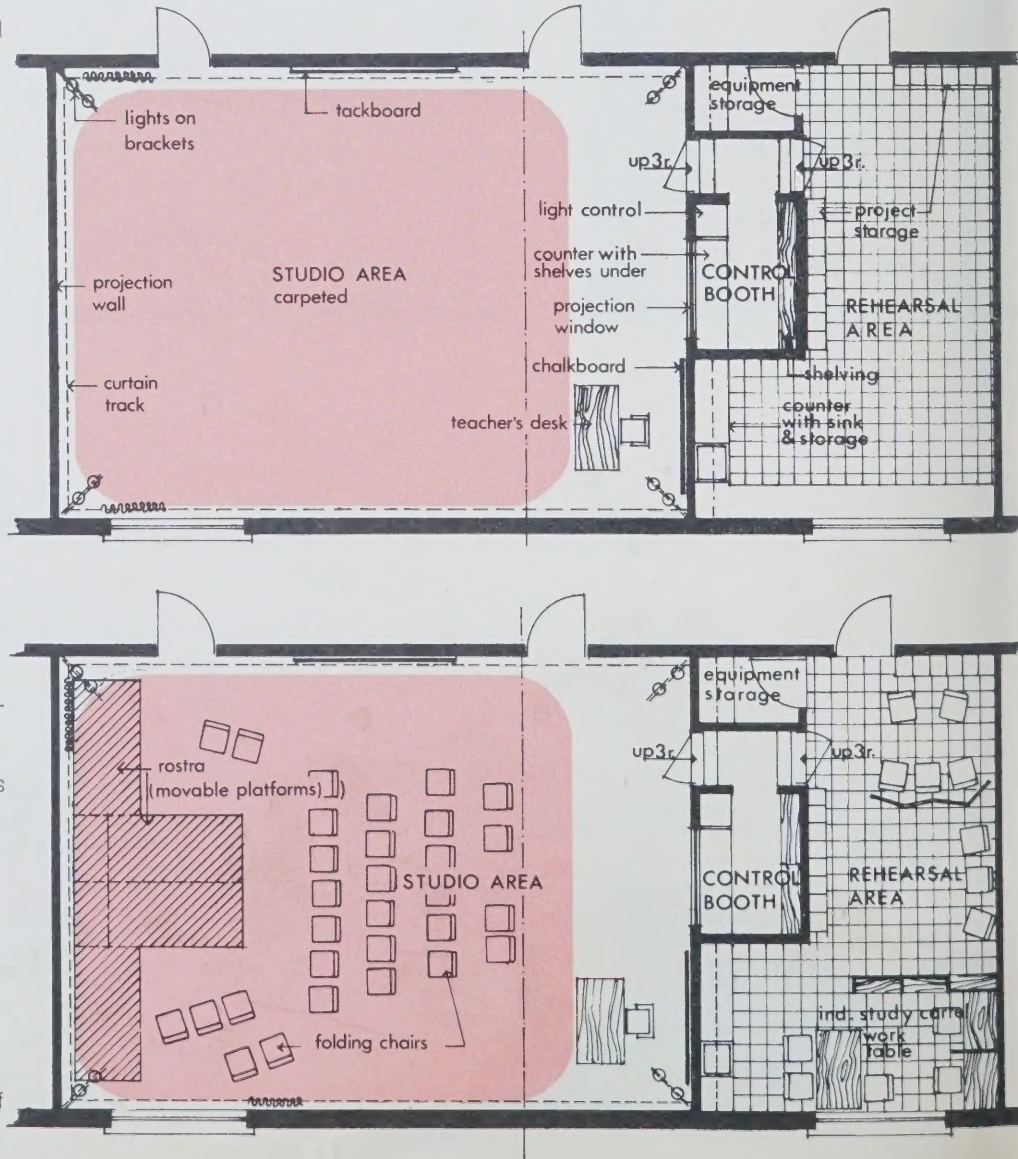
Duplex electrical outlets should be placed, at baseboard level, on three of the four walls, the projection wall being left free.

Staging arrangements can be obtained by using movable carpeted platforms of varying shapes and sizes.

The projection wall of the studio should be painted white.

The control booth should be raised twenty-one inches above floor level and should be equipped with a glass window (approx. 3′ x 6′) in the centre of the partition, placed about five feet above the floor of the studio. A projection counter should be installed about six inches below the bottom of the booth window, with deep shelving underneath to allow for the storage of lighting equipment. Two duplex outlets are required, one pair at each end of the projection counter. The booth should be equipped

Double Classroom Arrangement

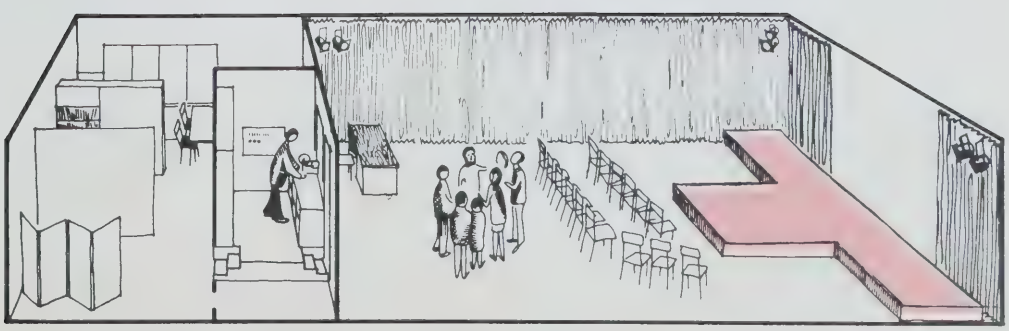


with shelving to accommodate tapes and records, etc. It should also contain the portable dimmer panel.

As part of its permanent equipment, the booth should house a record player, a tape recorder, and a slide projector.

The workshop area can be arranged in a variety of ways depending on the needs and interests of the students and the type of program. Although the room requires only regular ceiling lighting, it needs six duplex outlets.

Storage cupboards, shelving, and pigeon-hole cubicles, for storing student project material, are essential features of the workshop area.



Design for a Dramatic Arts Studio

A specifically planned Dramatic Arts Studio area has additional advantages over the converted double classroom. It can offer more usable space, a better shaped room for the variety of activities, and a ceiling of the right height for installation of a lighting grid. Carefully planned space is generally more economical and practical than space adapted from existing facilities.

In the studio, floor-to-ceiling draw curtains, of black-out quality, should be installed along three walls, the exception being the wall containing the projection booth. These curtains should be a dark neutral shade, ideally similar to the colour of the floor carpeting. Such curtains are relatively inexpensive and achieve three purposes. They transform a four-walled room into a studio with its own distinctive atmosphere; they provide neutral backdrop for improvisations and theatrical presentations; and they help absorb the excessive brightness from the stage-type lighting.

The ceiling height should be 14 feet, with a lighting pipe-grid attached. Any higher ceiling demands some sort of catwalk for students to reach the lights. A 14-foot ceiling will enable all lights to be hung, focussed and gelled with the aid of a movable ladder. This ladder should be part of the room's permanent equipment. The proposed grid is very simple in design — basically, pipes hung approximately two feet away from and parallel to the walls, and two cross pipes. The simpler the grid is, the greater the ingenuity required from the students.

The studio should be equipped with a minimum of twelve 500-watt fresnel-type spotlights.

This lighting system should be controlled by a portable dimmer panel in the control booth, where the patch panel will also be located.

If seating is required in the studio, it can be provided by folding or stacking chairs that can be stored away when not needed. The acoustic tile ceiling should be painted a dark neutral colour to solve the problem of light reflection.

Duplex electrical outlets should be placed, at baseboard level, on three of the four walls, the projection wall being left free..

The projection wall of the studio should be painted white.

To provide flexible staging arrangements movable carpeted platforms are recommended.

The control booth should be raised 21 inches above the floor level, and should be equipped with a glass window (approx. 3′ x 6′) opposite the centre of the projection wall, placed about 5 feet above the floor of the studio. A projection counter should be installed about 6 inches below the bottom of the booth window, with deep shelving underneath to allow for the storage of lighting equipment. Two duplex outlets are required, one pair at each end of the projection counter. The booth should be equipped with shelving to accommodate tapes and records, etc. It should also contain, as part of its permanent equipment, a record player, a tape recorder, and a slide projector. Speakers should be placed in a burlap-fronted wall box situated above the projection window.

Dressing rooms now become integral parts of such an area. They can also serve as project workshops, seminar spaces, film editing rooms, and so forth.

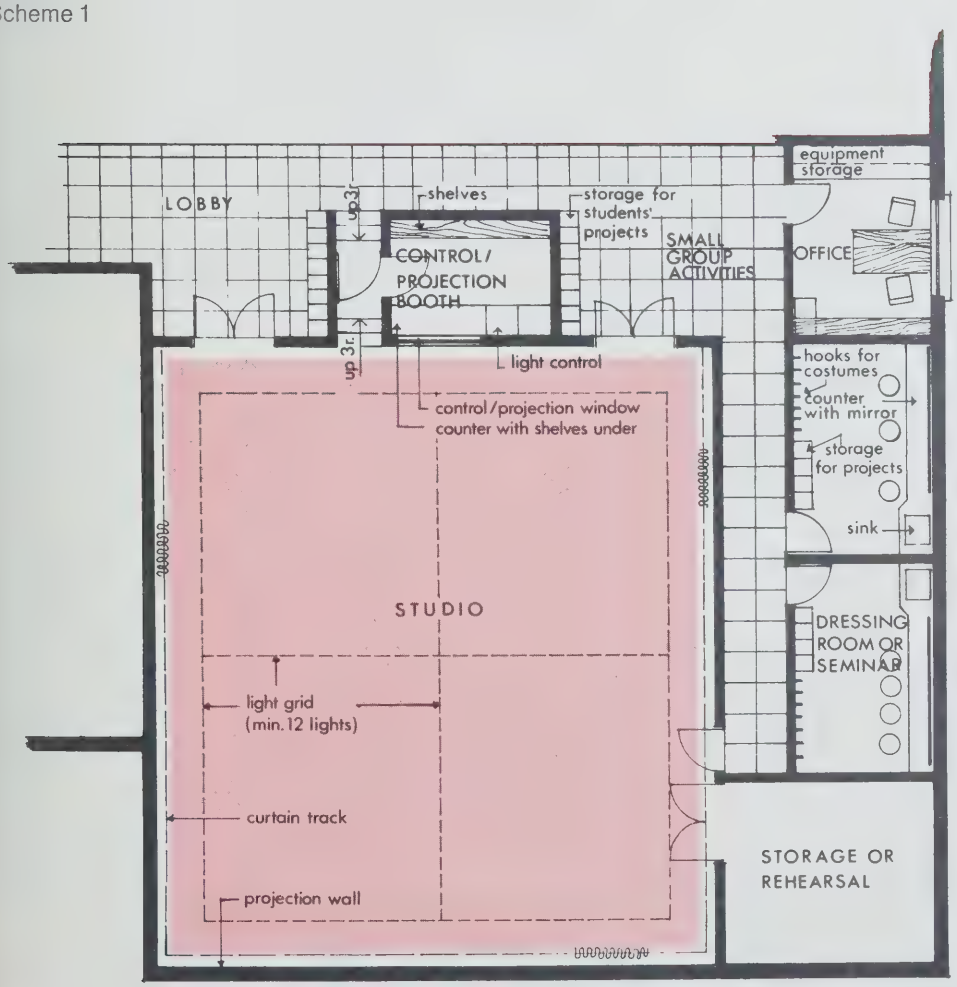
A specific area should be allotted for storage of both technical equipment and consumable supplies. Likewise, space should be found for the installation of pigeon-hole cubicles for storing student project materials.

The office can also function as an additional seminar area.

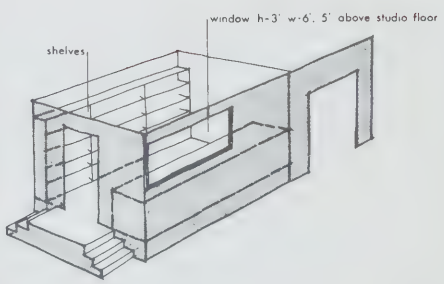
Because of the heat generated from the lights and from the physical activity of the students, the studio should be adequately ventilated.

For heating, the studio needs its own individually controlled thermostat.

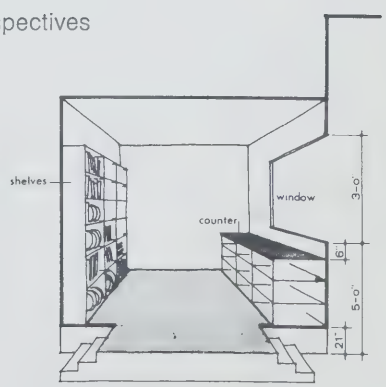
Dramatic Arts Studio
Scheme 1



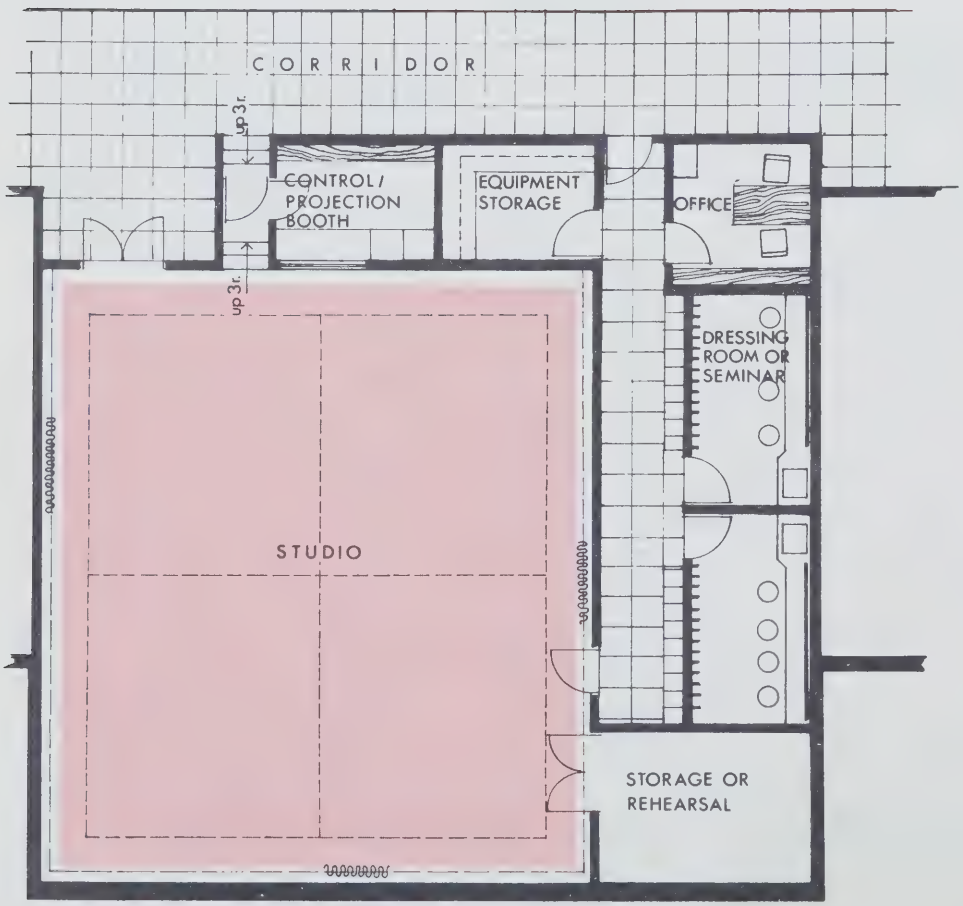
Control Booth



Perspectives



Dramatic Arts Studio
Scheme 2



Design for a Dramatic Arts Studio Complex

Suggested for the Senior Divisions (1600 - 1800 students)

The concept of a drama complex, two examples of which are illustrated on the following pages, suggests an ideal environment for a Dramatic Arts program, since, within it, a great many students can engage in a wide variety of creative activities. Such space offers almost unlimited opportunities for students to explore experiences in drama which would otherwise be severely limited or withheld. Experimental theatre, multi-media presentations, sound and sight-sound collages, design projects, film-making, mask construction, and so forth can be more fully explored when there is space: space for intensive discussion, planning, experimentation and constant interaction.

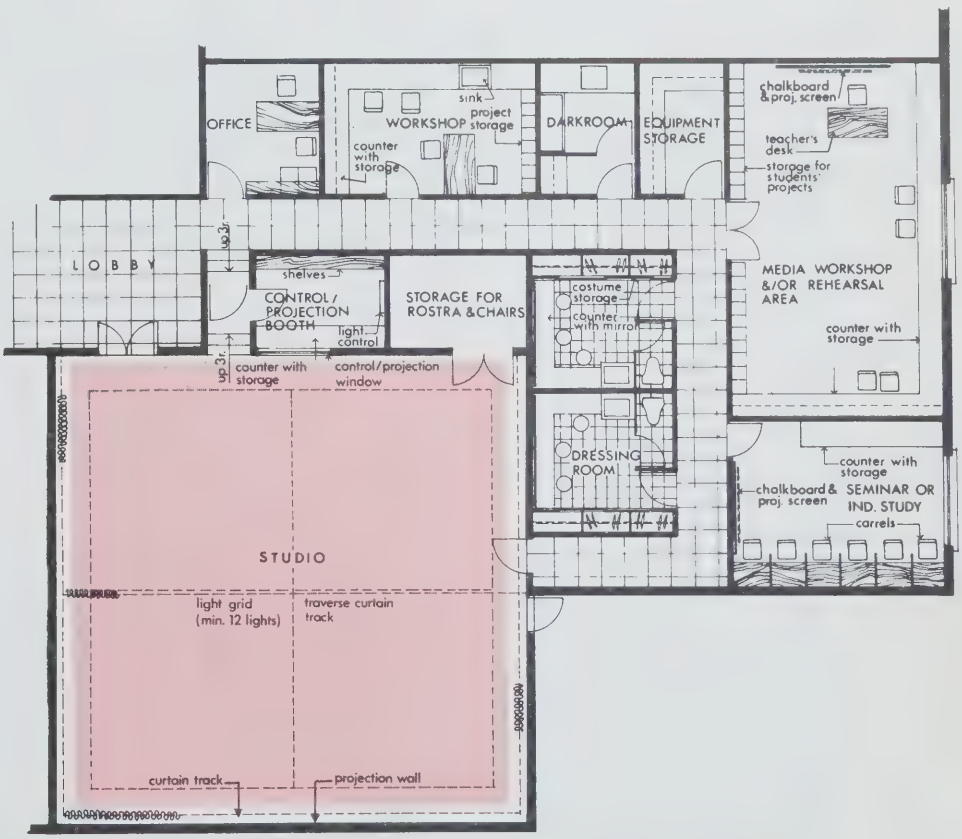
The addition of a traverse curtain permits the studio to be divided in half for presentation or rehearsal purposes.

In addition to the permanent equipment already suggested for a planned drama studio, the complex would require other technical items. These might include some of the following: 16mm projectors, super 8 cameras and projectors, editors, splicers, additional reel-to-reel portable tape recorders, and sound mixers, programmers, special types of stage lighting including a strobe, sewing machines, etc.

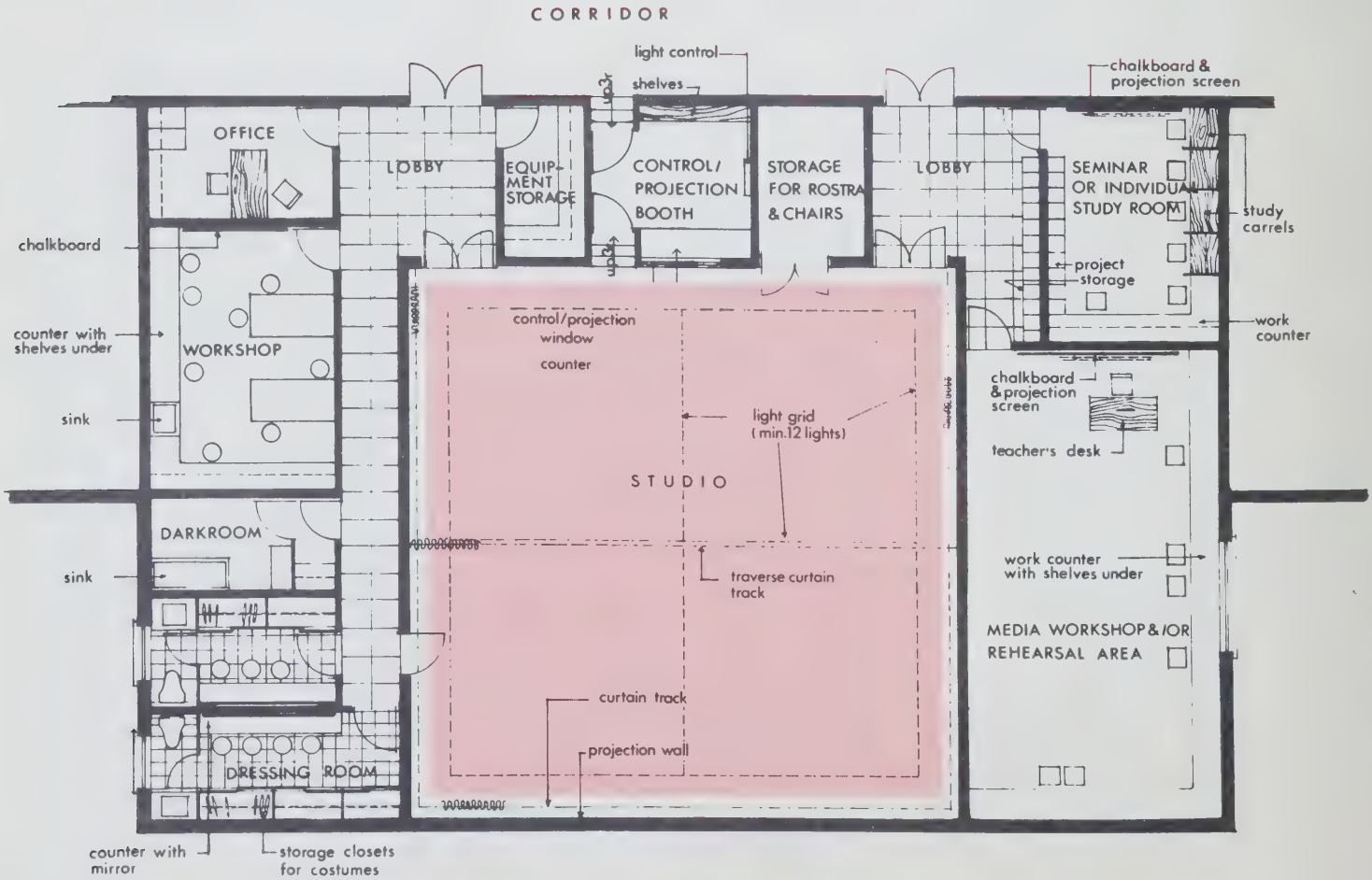
It is also reasonable to assume that such a complex should also be equipped with simple, portable and inexpensive VTR units. (A VTR unit can be purchased for about $2500.)

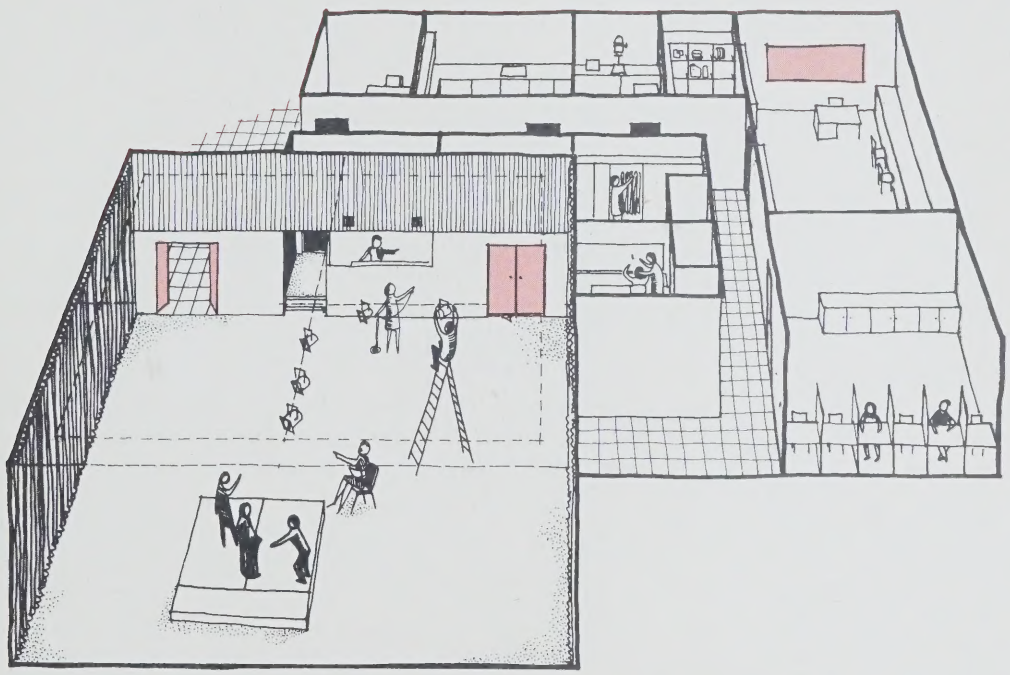
The complex should be fitted with an internal intercom system to permit ease of communication.

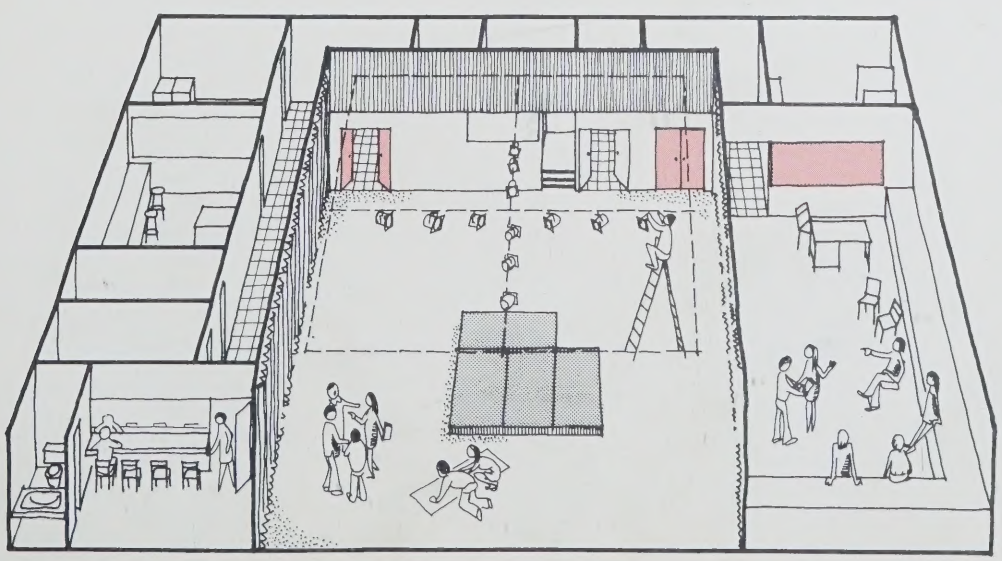
Dramatic Arts Studio Complex
Scheme 1



Dramatic Arts Studio Complex
Scheme 2







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